

John Carroll University Carroll Collected

Theology & Religious Studies

12-1-1997

Review of Ennodius of Pavia, 'Panegyricus Dictus Clementissimo Rege Theodorico': A Critical Edition, by C. Rohr

Joseph F. Kelly

John Carroll University, kelly@jcu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub

 Part of the [Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kelly, Joseph F., "Review of Ennodius of Pavia, 'Panegyricus Dictus Clementissimo Rege Theodorico': A Critical Edition, by C. Rohr" (1997). *Theology & Religious Studies*. 23.

http://collected.jcu.edu/theo_rels-facpub/23

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Carroll Collected. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theology & Religious Studies by an authorized administrator of Carroll Collected. For more information, please contact connell@jcu.edu.

garb in order to make itself recognizable to the pagan world. This affected chiefly its intellectual vocabulary, which is still with us.

Stead's book treats this new, philosophical linguistic idiom of the Greco-Roman philosophers, used by Christians up to and including the age of Augustine. The author surveys the philosophical classical tradition before and after the rise of Christianity and concludes that Christian intellectuals did their best but never rose to the heights of the great philosophers, except for Augustine, whom the author admires. But, as the author well knows, to measure up to the great philosophers was not their intention. Their duty, as they saw it, was to remain faithful to the Christian revelation in Jesus Christ, and by borrowing classical philosophical ideas they tried to point out to pagans that their philosophy was the way, as Clement of Alexandria said, that God was revealing himself to them, as he did to the Jews in the Old Testament, by using their own idiom.

This is a brilliant book, written with an almost German complexity although the author is an Englishman. There are many brilliant ideas in it which space does not permit mention, but I wish to draw attention to his most pertinent explanation of why the early Christians found it difficult to accept Aristotle while the Middle Ages and Thomas Aquinas found him to be essential to their own scholastic theology (p. 39). Another point: on the very first page the author makes a remarkable statement about the service which philosophy made to Christianity and for the sake of that statement alone, this book should be widely read. "Philosophy," he writes, "helped to change the Christian Church from an obscure Jewish sect into a worldwide civilizing force."

Christian Theological Seminary
Indianapolis, Indiana

CHARLES B. ASHANIN

Der Theoderich-Panegyricus des Ennodius. By CHRISTIAN ROHR. *Monumenta Germaniae Historiae, Studien und Texte* 12. Hannover, Germany: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1995. xxxvii + 308 pp. DM 80.

Although a native of Gaul, Ennodius of Pavia (473–521) spent his busy and important ecclesiastical career in Ostrogothic Italy during the reign of the Arian king Theodoric (493–526). Like Boethius and Cassiodorus, he tried to reconcile Nicene Romans and Arian Goths, hopeful that some kind of Romano-Gothic synthesis would emerge. Although he had blood on his hands, Theodoric was viewed by many Romans as one who might be able to effect such a synthesis since he had lived for nine years in Constantinople and had practiced religious tolerance as ruler of Italy. Byzantine ambitions in Italy obviated any hope of reconciling Goth and Roman, but Theodoric's reign witnessed the writing of several important Latin works with that goal in mind.

Around 507 Ennodius wrote a panegyric to Theodoric. In so doing, he followed standard court procedure of the Roman era, that is, he treated the

Gothic king as previous poets had treated Roman emperors—something he knew Theodoric would recognize and appreciate. Ennodius praised the king for bringing peace to Italy, and he practically absolved him for killing—with his own hand—Odovacar, the previous barbarian ruler of Italy.

The *Panegyric* is not a long text, but Ennodius's Latin can be difficult, even convoluted. Yet the bishop did have his moments: "Italiae rector in amicitiam colligit duo diversissima, ut sit in ira sine conparatione fulmineus, laetitia sine nube formosus" (p. 262).

In this volume Rohr offers a critical edition of the Latin text, *Panegyricus dictus clementissimo rege Theodorico*, along with a German translation. Combined these occupy only about one-fifth of the book. For the rest Rohr provides a brief biography of Ennodius and a description of the panegyric along with its date, style, and historical value. He devotes almost half the book (pp. 64–194) to discussing the manuscript tradition, florilegia, previous editions, and his own edition and translation. A twenty-eight-page bibliography, a list of sources (*Stellenregister*), and a guide to Latin terms (*Wortverzeichnis*) complete the volume.

Rohr has produced a thorough and careful work. This is especially true of his discussion of the manuscripts and florilegia, which enables the reader to see the influence of Ennodius and the importance attached to the *Panegyricus* by later generations. Although rather reasonably priced, this highly technical study will have limited appeal, being of value mostly to the Ennodius specialist (*rara avis*). On the other hand, this edition will not be replaced for some time, and therefore deserves a place in the university research library.

John Carroll University
Cleveland, Ohio

JOSEPH F. KELLY

Channels of Imperishable Fire: The Beginnings of Christian Mystical Poetry and Dioscorus of Aphroditto. By CLEMENT A. KUEHN. Lang Classical Studies 7. New York: Peter Lang, 1995. xxiv + 291 pp. \$62.95.

Dioscorus of Aphroditto is hardly a household name, even among historians of early Christianity. He was a minor figure in sixth-century Upper Egypt, quite lost to history until his personal archives were discovered early in this century. They had been stuffed into a large jar which was stoppered—to the everlasting gratitude of classicists—with a volume of plays by Menander. Of Dioscorus's personal contributions to the jar, the majority are legal documents pertaining to his status as a landowner and his work as a legal consultant. There are also some autograph poems, which did not arouse much admiration. On the whole, he has figured in modern research more for his legal documents.

Clement A. Kuehn has probably changed that situation. Combining a general survey of distinctive qualities in the poems with a detailed study of two of them and an extensive analysis of their literary, philosophical, theological, and